



STATEHOUSE REPORT

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209 East State Street • Columbus, Ohio 43215-4309
Phone: 614-221-5627 • Fax: 614-221-6986 • www.ccao.org

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Commissioner Old testifies on ballot issue numbering bill

On Tuesday, [Erie County Commissioner Matt Old testified](#) on his own behalf regarding [House Bill 271](#) (Representative Bob Peterson and Representative Adam Mathews) in the House State and Local Government Committee.

The bill will require that, beginning in the November 2024 general election, state questions and issues must be consecutively numbered without returning to "1" in the next election cycle. For example, if two statewide issues appear on the ballot in November 2024, they would be named Issue 1 and Issue 2; if a statewide issue then appears on the ballot in 2025, it would be named Issue 3, and so on. During the hearing, the committee accepted an amendment that would reset the numbering after Issue 500 (for context, were this provision included when the 1912 Constitution was ratified, the next statewide issue would be Issue 306).

In his testimony, Commissioner Old highlighted that the bill will help reduce voter confusion. He used the 2023 election cycle as an example, where the August special election had an Issue 1 and the November general election also had an Issue 1. The short time period between the two elections may have caused some confusion for voters.

Another benefit of the bill raised by Commissioner Old is that numbering state issues consecutively will generally reduce the likelihood that local ballot issues, such as sales tax levies or property tax levies, will have the same issue number as a statewide issue. This will also improve voter clarity.

The Legislative Service Commission's [fiscal analysis](#) of the bill does not predict any financial cost to the Secretary of State's office or county boards of election.

You can read Commissioner Old's [testimony here](#) and view it on the [Ohio Channel](#), beginning at the 02:05 mark.

Indigent Defense Study Task Force to meet next week

The Indigent Defense Study Task Force, created under House Bill 150 of the 134th General Assembly, will meet for the first time next Thursday at 10:00 a.m. The task force is required to examine the state's indigent defense system and provide recommendations to the General Assembly regarding the delivery, structure, and funding of indigent defense. Fairfield County Commissioner Steve Davis serves as CCAO's representative on the task force.

At the meeting next week, the State Public Defender will give a presentation regarding how the indigent defense system currently functions, followed by the Ohio State Bar Association giving a presentation on the recommendations from its "Future of Indigent Defense Task Force" that CCAO participated in.

The Association believes that CCAO will be invited to speak to the task force at its second meeting, currently scheduled for February 8th. The task force may schedule additional meetings in the future.

As indigent defense funding has been a key priority for CCAO for several years, the Policy Team will keep members informed of the work of the task force as it hears testimony and prepares its report. The report must be submitted no later than December 31, 2024, at which point the task force will be dissolved.

If you have questions regarding the task force, please contact Managing Director of Policy [Kyle Petty](#).

LAST CALL: CCAO conducting two surveys: jail projects and legislative relationship practices

County Jail Projects

CCAO and the Buckeye State Sheriffs Association have partnered to [gather data](#) on statewide capital funding needs for county and regional jail facilities. **We hope to have all information gathered by January 31, 2024.** Completing the data collection by this date will enable us to include results of the survey in materials distributed to candidates for the General Assembly.

When we last conducted a survey into these needs in 2019, we identified nearly \$1.4 billion in funding needs across 44 counties and four regional jails. Since 2019, the DeWine-Husted Administration and the General Assembly have provided \$175 million to jail projects across the state, helping to bring needed improvements to county jails.

As we head into the third capital budget since the state-county partnership on jail construction was renewed, both associations believe it is time to provide lawmakers an updated estimate of the statewide need, particularly given how costs have increased since 2019.

You can access the survey through the link below and can provide answers either through the questions in the survey or through a document upload link included at the survey's end. Please complete the [survey here](#).

If you have any questions regarding this survey, please contact Kyle Petty, Managing Director of Policy for CCAO, and/or Bob Cornwell, Executive Director of BSSA.

Legislative Relationships

At its September meeting, the CCAO Board of Directors voted unanimously to create a Statehouse Advocacy Task Force. The mission of the task force will be to strengthen the advocacy efforts of CCAO members through effective relationship building strategies with members of the Ohio General Assembly and education on key CCAO policy priorities.

As part of the Task Force's mission to strength the Association's members' advocacy efforts through effective relationship building strategies with members of the Ohio General Assembly, CCAO is asking members to take a few minutes to complete a brief survey about how our members currently advocate and build relationships with their legislative delegation. ***We would like to have this information gathered by the end of next week*** so we can compile it before the Statehouse Advocacy Task Force's next meeting in February.

You can access the survey [here](#). If you have any questions regarding the survey, please contact either [Kyle Petty](#) or [Nick Ciolli](#).

Recording of CCAO, Ohio EMA solar eclipse webinar available

On Wednesday, CCAO hosted a webinar with the Ohio Emergency Management Agency regarding what counties should know and how they can prepare for the total solar eclipse that will occur later this year.

People [within a 124-mile-wide band](#) in the state of Ohio will experience a total solar eclipse on Monday, April 8, 2024. This extremely rare event is expected to draw large numbers of visitors to Ohio. Areas outside the band will experience a partial eclipse.

You can access the recording and a copy of the slide deck on [CCAO's webinar archive](#).

Legislative Activity

Committee Hearings

Several bills of interest to counties received hearings this week across different committees.

House State and Local Government

- [House Bill 315](#) (Representative Thomas Hall and Representative Bill Seitz): To make various township law changes and to make an appropriation.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony and proponent testimony from the Ohio Township Association and officials representing four townships.

Introduction of Bills

The following bill(s) that may be of interest to counties were introduced this week:

- [House Bill 378](#) (Representative Brian Lorenz and Representative Nick Santucci): To authorize a full homestead exemption for surviving spouses of members of the uniformed services killed in the line of duty.
- [Senate Bill 213](#) (Senator Jerry Cirino): To establish supported decision-making as a nonrestrictive alternative to guardianship for adults with developmental disabilities.

Upcoming Committee Hearings

The following committees are currently scheduled to meet and discuss bills that may be of interest to counties. Other committees will likely meet as well but as of press time for *Statehouse Report* they have not released agendas. Please note that these schedules are subject to change.

If you would like to offer testimony on any bill, please visit the committee page and contact the committee chair's office for instructions on how to submit testimony.

Tuesday, January 23

[House Ways and Means](#) (2:30 p.m.)

- [House Bill 344](#) (Representative Adam Mathews and Representative Thomas Hall): To eliminate the authority to levy replacement property tax levies and to modify the law governing certain property tax complaints.
 - Third hearing, opponent testimony
- [House Bill 347](#) (Representative Don Jones): To presume certain trailers and vehicles are sold for agricultural purposes and thus exempt from sales and use tax when sold to established farmers.
 - Third hearing, opponent testimony

[Senate Community Revitalization](#) (2:30 p.m.)

- [Senate Bill 105](#) (Senator Terry Johnson and Senator Vernon Sykes): Regarding the composition of boards of alcohol, drug addiction, and mental health services; the authority of the boards; and the requirements for operation of recovery housing residences.
 - Fourth hearing, no testimony

Wednesday, January 24

Joint Committee on Property Tax Review and Reform (10:00 a.m.)

- Invited testimony from the County Auditors' Association of Ohio and the Ohio Board of Tax Appeals.

[Senate Government Oversight](#) (10:30 p.m.)

- [Senate Bill 185](#) (Senator Al Landis): To exempt redaction request forms, affidavits, and the records of the work schedules of designated public service workers from disclosure under public records law.

- First hearing, sponsor testimony
- [House Concurrent Resolution 6](#) (Representative Angela King and Representative Phil Plummer): To urge Congress to repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony

[Senate Ways and Means](#) (2:30 p.m.)

- [Senate Bill 172](#) (Senator Andrew Brenner): To exempt from sales and use tax sales of manned aircraft.
 - First hearing, sponsor testimony
- [Senate Bill 186](#) (Senator Louis Blessing III and Senator Catherine Ingram): To require payment of property taxes and assessments when a lot is split or transferred and to generally prohibit tax-delinquent property owners from purchasing tax-foreclosed property.
 - Second hearing, proponent testimony